



Washington State Department of Agriculture

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Taste Washington Day brings farm-fresh food to school

OLYMPIA – Students are back in class and the fresh food harvest is going strong, making the perfect blend for Taste Washington Day, a time to celebrate healthy eating and our state's agriculture.

On Oct. 1, the [Washington State Department of Agriculture](#) (WSDA) and the [Washington School Nutrition Association](#) (WSNA) will partner with many farmers and schools statewide to feature Washington-grown foods in their cafeteria meals.

In [proclaiming](#) Oct. 1 as Taste Washington Day, Gov. Jay Inslee noted that the state's farmers and ranchers produce nearly \$10 billion in products each year, and that the National School Lunch Program encourages eating nutritious agricultural products by offering them in meals to school students.

"Taste Washington Day helps students understand where their food comes from and gives them a chance to try fresh, healthy foods," WSDA Director Bud Hover said. "It also celebrates our state's farmers and ranchers who grow a range of crops and foods – from asparagus and beef to wheat and zucchini."

Since the agriculture department and the nutrition association first partnered on Taste Washington Day in 2010, at least 60 school districts have participated. Many use Taste Washington Day to test Farm to School programs, which promote using locally produced foods as regular features of their school menus. Others may plan once-a-year activities, such as inviting a farmer to lunch or visiting a farmers market.

The day has become popular with farmers, school administrators, local officials, families and students. It's also part of a nationwide effort to improve the nutritional value of meals schools serve to children.

"Children are willing to try new food when it is introduced with a twist," said Kaye Wetli, school nutrition specialist and president of the Washington School Nutrition Association. "Taste Washington Day presents a great opportunity for us. In my district, with the help of the FFA students and our partner farms, the students are excited to try the fresh, local food served from the salad bars and as samples in the lunch rooms."

Visit the Farm to School program's [Taste Washington Day Web page](#) for more information, including suggested recipes or ways to participate. Or contact WSDA Taste Washington Day coordinator Shoko Kumagai at skumagai@agr.wa.gov or 206-256-1874.

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